



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

Los Angeles River Center & Gardens
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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

FROM:  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Executive Officer

DATE: July 7, 2004

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item XXIV: Consideration of resolution authorizing (a) conditionally entering into a Settlement Agreement and Release with Presidio Chatsworth Partners, LLC, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, and Linda Corbridge regarding access to APN 2821-019-007 through Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) property in Browns and Devil Canyon, and (b) conditionally granting an access easement across MRCA Deerlake Highlands property to Linda Corbridge, unincorporated Chatsworth.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing (a) conditionally entering into a Settlement Agreement and Release with Presidio Chatsworth Partners, LLC, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, and Linda Corbridge regarding access to APN 2821-019-007 through Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) property in Browns and Devil Canyon, and (b) conditionally granting an access easement across MRCA Deerlake Highlands property to Linda Corbridge.

Background: APN 2821-019-007 is an approximately 40-acre parcel located between the proposed Deerlake Ranch development in the Deerlake Highlands and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority's (MRCA) 405-acre Schweitzer Trust-Webb property between Devil and Browns Creeks. That holding is part of Michael D. Antonovich Regional Park at Joughin Ranch. The proposed main parking and staging area for the park is located just north of the subject property in the abandoned Gopher Canyon gravel quarry area. The 40-acre property contains two prominent knolls that provide complete visual separation between Michael D. Antonovich Regional Park at Joughin Ranch and the proposed Deerlake Ranch project. The entire property recently burned. All of it is integral to the core habitat of the Santa Susana Mountains.

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The MRCA made a formal offer on the property in the fall of 2002 and was outbid by Linda Corbridge. To staff's knowledge the parcel has no legal access. The property can be reached through at least three dirt roads that cross MRCA property on the southern, northern and eastern boundaries of the property. The western boundary of the property abuts both small private lots and Los Angeles County-owned property. The MRCA's 10-foot-wide strip of land along the entire northern boundary of the Deerlake Ranch project (Deerlake Highlands) runs along the southern boundary of APN 2821-019-007.

Ms. Corbridge has been requesting access to her 40 acres for over a year. Earlier this year she filed suit against the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and the developer of Deerlake Ranch (Presidio Chatsworth Partners, LLC) to force access. The Conservancy does not own any of the subject land.

The proposed Settlement Agreement and Release with Presidio Chatsworth Partners, LLC, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, and Linda Corbridge regarding access to APN 2821-019-007 through MRCA property in Browns and Devil Canyon would grant Ms. Corbridge a 28 to 58-foot-wide access and utility easement and a temporary grading license over the MRCA's ten-foot-wide strip. The easement would only benefit APN 2821-019-007. The width of the permanent easement would not exceed 28 feet unless the County specifically required a wider easement over the MRCA's ten foot strip.

Ms. Corbridge would release Presidio Chatsworth Partners, LLC, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, and the MRCA from the lawsuit and she would Quit Claim any prescriptive easements over surrounding MRCA properties. Transfer of the access easement will require Corbridge to permanently deed restrict all portions of her property on the northern, Gopher Canyon watershed portion of her property. The attached figure shows the deed restriction area. The line was defined by the watershed boundary. The deed restriction would also restrict the development area to four houses and related amenities. When Corbridge or her successors receive entitlements to build on the allowable development area, at a minimum a conservation easement must be granted to the MRCA over the deed restriction area. The option remains open for additional easement or land interest to the MRCA through donation or the entitlement process.

The condition on these actions is that the MRCA would complete its California Environmental Quality (CEQA) review prior to the signing of documents or the transfer of the said easement to Ms. Corbridge. The no cost to the public acquisition of the approximate northern half of her property appears to warrant transfer of an easement. In addition, the terrain in both the northern and central portion of the proposed "Corbridge Development Area" should limit all development to the far southwestern corner of her property.